60TH CONGRESS, 2d Session. } SENATE. { DOCUMENT No. 666.

Africa - West
Liberia

CONDITIONS IN LIBERIA.

MESSAGE

FROM THE

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,

TRANSMITTING

A LETTER FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE RELATIVE TO THE APPOINTMENT OF A COMMISSION TO INQUIRE AS TO CONDITIONS IN LIBERIA.

JANUARY 19, 1909.—Read; referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations and ordered to be printed.

To the Senate and House of Representatives:

The inclosed letter from the Secretary of State with the accompanying documents in reference to Liberia explain themselves. I very earnestly hope that the recommendation of the Secretary of State will be approved and that Congress will grant the appropriation of $20,000 to pay the expenses of a commission who shall go to Liberia to examine into the situation, confer with the officers of the Liberian Government, and with the representatives of other governments actually present in Monrovia, and report recommendations as to the specific action on the part of the Government of the United States most apt to render effective relief to the Republic of Liberia under the present critical circumstances. The relations of the United States to Liberia are such as to make it an imperative duty for us to do all in our power to help the little Republic which is struggling against such adverse conditions. I very earnestly hope that the action proposed will be taken.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT.

THE WHITE HOUSE, *January 19, 1909.*

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
Washington, January 18, 1909.

The PRESIDENT:

In the month of June last the Republic of Liberia, through a commission specially accredited to this Government, applied to the United States for assistance in maintaining its independence and to enable it to carry on a peaceful and orderly government. The particular form of assistance which the Commissioners contemplated

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in their application was chiefly a guaranty by the United States of the territorial and political integrity of Liberia, with such reservations and upon such conditions as might be agreed upon.

Upon being convinced that such a guaranty was impracticable, the commissioners further requested that the United States should lend to Liberia officers to aid in the conduct of its administration and should confer with the governments of other countries having interests upon the west coast of Africa, and particularly with Great Britain, which has rendered material assistance to Liberia in the past, with a view to ascertain how best to render assistance and with a view to give to Liberia the moral support which would result from evidence of interest in her welfare on the part of the United States.

To these requests attentive consideration has been given. There have been full conferences with the commissioners and with Mr. Booker T. Washington, who was much interested in their mission, and with representatives of other interested powers, and reports from general and from special representatives of the United States in Liberia, and the conclusion reached by the State Department is quite clear that Liberia is very much in need of assistance, that the United States can help her substantially, and that it is our duty to help her.

The condition of Liberia is really serious. Between forty and fifty thousand civilized negroes, for the most part descendants of the original colonists from the United States, occupy a territory comprising 43,000 square miles, in which there are also over a million and a half members of uncivilized native tribes. The civilized part of the population have been to a great degree cut off from any intimate relation with the rest of the civilized world for two-thirds of a century. They began with but little education, with no acquired skill in the art of government, and they have had but little opportunity to improve through intercourse with other and more advanced communities. They find it especially difficult to control the native tribes or to conduct their own government in accordance with modern requirements.

The British colony of Sierra Leone to the north and the French possessions closing in their hinterland to the east are almost continuously complaining of the failure of Liberia to maintain order upon the border. Notwithstanding the very kindly disposition on the part of Great Britain and the similar disposition on the part of France, there is imminent danger that the Republic, unless it receives outside assistance, will not be able to maintain itself very long.

Liberia is an American colony. It was established through the combined efforts of our Government and philanthropic and missionary enterprises in the United States, organized in the American Colonization Society and in societies in Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Mississippi, Louisiana, and other States. The Government participation in the establishment was the result of a series of statutes extending from 1794 to 1819 for the abolition of slavery. The last of these statutes, the act of March 3, 1819, provided that negroes from captured slavers should be safely kept, supported, and removed "beyond the limits of the United States."

For the execution of this statute President Monroe in 1819 appointed two agents of the United States Government who proceeded to cooperate with the various colonization societies, and according to a report of Amos Kendall, Fourth Auditor to the Secretary of the

Navy in 1830, the resources of the Government were employed "to colonize recaptured Africans, to build homes for them, to furnish them with farming utensils, to pay instructors to teach them, to purchase ships for their convenience, to build forts for their protection, to supply them with arms and munitions of war, to enlist troops to guard them, and to employ the army and navy in their defence."

The first members of the colony were transported from America and landed upon African soil in vessels chartered by the Government of the United States.

On the 24th of March, 1843, Mr. Webster, then Secretary of State, writing of Liberia to Mr. Everett, then American Minister in London, said:

> Founded principally with a view to the melioration of the condition of an interesting portion of the great human family, this colony has conciliated more and more the good will, and has from time to time received the aid and support of this Government. Without having passed any laws for their regulation, the American Government takes a deep interest in the welfare of the people of Liberia, and is disposed to extend to them a just degree of countenance and protection.

On the 25th of September, 1843, Mr. Upshur, then Secretary of State, in a letter concerning Liberia, to the British minister in Washington, said:

> To the United States it is an object of peculiar interest. It was established by our people, and has gone on under the countenance and good offices of our Government. It is identified with the success of a great object, which has enlisted the feelings and called into action the enlarged benevolence of a large proportion of our people. It is natural, therefore, that we should regard it with greater sympathy and solicitude than would attach to it under other circumstances.

From time to time since 1843 there have been expressions of interest in Liberia on the part of the United States Government, including the recognition of the independence of the Republic and a treaty of commerce and navigation in 1862, and also including a correspondence with the British Government in an ineffective effort to be of assistance to the people of Liberia in 1897. The present situation is to some extent indicated by a recent correspondence through the American ambassador in London, a copy of which is annexed.

It is unnecessary to argue that the duty of the United States toward the unfortunate victims of the slave trade was not completely performed by landing them upon the coast of Africa, and that our nation rests under the highest obligation to assist them, so far as they need assistance, toward the maintenance of free, orderly, and prosperous civil society.

The interest of the people of the United States in the welfare and progress of the millions of American citizens of the black race in the United States also furnishes a strong reason for helping to maintain this colony, whose success in self-government will give hope and courage, and whose failure would bring discouragement to the entire race.

With all the study which it has been possible to give and with all the assistance which the Liberian commissioners themselves could give, it has been found very difficult to determine the precise things which the Government of the United States had better do by way of giving assistance, and upon the most careful consideration I am satisfied that we ought to send to Liberia a commission of three experienced and judicious Americans to examine the situation there and confer with the officers of the Liberian Government and with the rep-

resentatives of other governments actually present in Monrovia, with a view to reporting recommendations as to the specific action on the part of the Government of the United States which will constitute the most effective measures of relief.

I accordingly advise that Congress be asked for an appropriation of say $20,000 to pay the expenses of such a commission, and that in case of favorable action by Congress a suitable vessel of the United States Navy be designated to transport the commission to and from Liberia.

Faithfully, yours, ELIHU ROOT.

No. 714] DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
Washington, June 13, 1908.

SIR: I inclose herewith a copy of a communication, dated June 11, 1908, from the Liberian Mission to the United States, by which the Government of the United States is requested to invite the Government of Great Britain to join with it in an arrangement looking to the perpetuity of Liberia.

With the envoys' note are inclosed copies of signed pro-memoriæ which passed between the British Embassy at Washington and the Department in March, 1897. While copies of these are already in your embassy, further copies are herewith inclosed for your convenience.

Referring to these and to the communication addressed to the President of Liberia by the British consul at Monrovia on January 14, 1908 (a copy of which you will find with the department's instruction to you No. 630 of March 10, 1908), the department desires you to say to Sir Edward Grey that the Government of the United States having special interest in the welfare of Liberia, arising from the circumstances under which the settlement of that country was made, is very desirous to be of assistance to the Liberians, and that, having especially in view the British Government's communication of March 8, 1897, the Government of the United States would be glad to have the views of the British Government as to how the United States could cooperate with that Government toward promoting the welfare of Liberia.

I am, sir, your obedient servant,

ELIHU ROOT.

The Honorable WHITELAW REID,
American Ambassador, London.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
Washington, June 18, 1908.

SIR: I inclose for your information and the files of the legation copy of a correspondence relative to the request made by the Liberian envoys in this country that the United States invite the Government of Great Britain to cooperate with it with a view to assuring the perpetuity of Liberia.

I am, sir,

Your obedient servant,

ELIHU ROOT

ERNEST LYON, ESQ.,
American Minister, Monrovia.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
Washington, June 13, 1908.

GENTLEMEN: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your communication of the 11th instant, in which you inclose copies of the pro-memoriæ exchanged between the British ambassador at Washington and the Secretary of State of the United States, and dated respectively March 8 and 13, 1897, concerning the special interest taken by the Governments of Great Britain and the United States in the independence of Liberia.

In connection with these documents you request that this Government "take the initiative toward inviting Great Britain to join with the United States in an arrangement that will give some definite shape to the deep interest she so generously expressed in the perpetuity of Liberia."

In reply I have the honor to state that the ambassador of the United States at London will be instructed to open with the Government of Great Britain the subject of contributing to the welfare of Liberia, making the communication of March 8, 1897, from the British ambassador at Washington, the basis of negotiation.

I have the honor to be, gentlemen,
Your obedient servant, ELIHU ROOT.

Messrs. G. W. GIBSON, JAMES J. DOSSEN, CHARLES P. DUNBAR,
Envoys Extraordinary of Liberia to the United States.

Copy from files State Department, Liberia.

PROMEMORIA.

WASHINGTON, *March 8, 1897.*

The undersigned is instructed by his Government with reference to repeated encroachments on the territory of the Liberian Republic to submit to the United States Government the following suggestions:

It might prove of service to the Liberian Republic and encourage it to resist absorption by a foreign power were the Governments of Great Britain and of the United States to make a joint declaration of the special interest taken by them in the independence of that Republic.

JULIAN PAUNCEFOTE,
H. B. M. Ambassador.

PROMEMORIA.

MARCH 13, 1897.

Having reference to the confidential promemoria submitted by his excellency the British ambassador, on the 8th of March last, and being desirous, in view of the circumstance of that Republic being an offshoot of the community of the United States, and to show toward it a kind spirit and all proper sympathy, the United States for its part declares the special interest taken by it in the independence of the Republic of Liberia and the concern it must feel should any prospect of its absorption by a foreign power develop in the future.

The Government of the United States is gratified to perceive from the British promemoria of March 8 last that Her Majesty's Government entertains a similar special interest in the independence of the Liberian Republic.

JOHN SHERMAN.

LEGATION OF UNITED STATES,
Monrovia, Liberia, July 13, 1897.

Mr. SECRETARY: It is my privilege to present these promemorias exchanged between the United States and Great Britain at Washington.

The one from the United States, which I have the honor to represent at this court, gives me profound pleasure to present to the home of my ancestors.

The one coming from Great Britain increases my admiration of Her Majesty's Government as a favor of justice and equity.

By these promemorias you are assured that any unfriendly encroachment upon your territory in future will be regarded by these powers as an act against their earnest protest.

The United States desires Liberia to remain an independent and distinct nation, and to resist all encroachment toward absorption, guaranteeing her sympathy to this end, assuring her that the friendship which has so long existed between the United States and Liberia remains unshaken and grows more intimate daily.

In expressing these good feelings, I am authorized to convey personally the warm affections of the new President of the United States of America for Liberia and her future prosperity.

I ever remain, faithfully and sincerely,

WILLIAM H. HEARD,
Min. Res. Con. Gen.

Hon. G. W. GIBSON,
Secretary of State.

THE ARLINGTON,
Washington, June 11, 1908.

SIR: Referring to our interview with you to-day, we have the honor to transmit herewith copies of documents from the files of the State Department, Monrovia, under dates March 8 and 13 and 13th July, 1897, being copies of the promemorias from your Government and Great Britain and of the dispatch from your minister to Liberia relating thereto.

We beg leave to repeat our request that your Government would take the initiative toward inviting Great Britain to join with the United States in an arrangement that will give some definite shape to the deep interest she so generously expressed in the perpetuity of Liberia and which received the sincere approval of your Government.

We beg again to thank you for the very kind assurances expressed in this relation.

With our high consideration, we have the honor to be, sir,
Your obedient servants,

G. W. GIBSON.
JAMES J. DOSSEN.
CHAS. B. DUNBAR.

The Honorable ELIHU ROOT,
Secretary of State, Washington.

No. 668.] AMERICAN EMBASSY, *London, July 25, 1908.*

SIR: With reference to the department's instruction No. 714 of the 13th ultimo requesting the views of the British Government as to the best manner in which they could at the present time cooperate with us in order to promote the welfare of Liberia, I have the honor to inclose herewith a copy of a note which I have received from Sir Edward Grey on the subject, dated the 23d instant, in reply to my note to him of the 29th ultimo, a copy of which is also inclosed. Sir Edward Grey's note suggests there would be no objection to the appointment of a judicial officer of United States to act as adviser if so desired.

I have the honor to be, sir,
Your obedient servant,

WHITELAW REID.

The honorable ELIHU ROOT,
Secretary of State.

AMERICAN EMBASSY, *London, June 29, 1908.*

SIR: In view of a request preferred by the three commissioners of Liberia now in Washington on a diplomatic mission, as well as in view of the old agreement between His Majesty's Government and that of the United States about their special interest in the independence of the Liberian Republic, I am instructed to say that the Government of the United States still maintains a special interest in the welfare of Liberia, arising from the circumstances under which the settlement of the country was made, and is very desirous now to be of assistance to the Liberians.

Recalling the agreement referred to (made on the initiative of His Majesty's Government March 8, 1897; concurred in by us March 13, 1897), we should be glad to have your views as to how the two Governments could best cooperate at the present time toward promoting the welfare of Liberia.

I have, etc.,

WHITELAW REID.

The Right Hon. Sir EDWARD GREY, Bt.

FOREIGN OFFICE, *July 23, 1908.*

YOUR EXCELLENCY: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your excellency's note of June 29, last, in which, after calling attention to the special interest felt by your excellency's Government in maintaining the independence of the Liberian Republic as borne out by the notes exchanged between the British and United States Governments in March, 1897, you request the views of His Majesty's Government as to the best manner in which the Government of the United States could at the present time cooperate with His Majesty's Government in order to promote the welfare of Liberia.

As your excellency is aware, the interest felt by the Government of the United States is fully shared by His Majesty's Government, who, at the request of the Liberian authorities themselves, have lent to them the services of certain officials to assist in reorganizing their customs

and their frontier police force. Mr. W. J. Lamont, who has been intrusted with the reorganization of the customs, has already been able to increase considerably the revenue derived from this branch of the administration and has succeeded, it is hoped, by his methods in introducing a more healthy tone into the customs department. He has also recently been appointed by the Liberian Government to be their financial adviser, and there is reason to hope that his advice may lead to an improvement in the administration of that department.

As I had the honor to explain in March last to the United States chargé d'affaires, His Majesty's Government have, in any measure they may be called upon to take in Liberia, no designs whatever upon the independence or integrity of the country, and they do not intend to undertake any responsibility with regard to it. The services of British officials have been lent to the Liberians solely with a view to the better preservation of order, more particularly in that part of Liberia which marches with Sierra Leone and improved administration.

The French Government also, as your excellency is doubtless aware, takes a special interest in the affairs of the Republic, and His Majesty's Government have already assured them that they would have no objection to the services of some French officials being lent for the same objects as the British officials. It is doubtful, therefore, whether there is at the present time any scope for the cooperation of the United States Government in the customs or police, and if they desire to render active assistance to the Liberian Government they will, perhaps, prefer to direct their attention to other branches of the administration, which are as urgently in need of reform.

That reforms are required in one other branch at least His Majesty's Government have reason to know, for among the chief difficulties which His Majesty's Government experience in regard to Liberia are the frequent complaints received from British subjects as to the treatment they receive in the Liberian courts. If, therefore, the United States Government could see their way to introducing reforms into the judiciary, either by lending the services of an official to act as judicial adviser or in some other manner, much good would, in the opinion of His Majesty's Government, be derived not only by the various subjects of foreign nationalities resident in the country, but also by the Liberians themselves.

While calling attention more especially to this one branch of the administration which has been a frequent source of trouble, I need hardly add that His Majesty's Government would welcome the cooperation of the Government of the United States with them in Liberia in any other manner which may appear more suitable or more desirable on a consideration of all the circumstances.

It appears to His Majesty's Government that the main risk to the future of Liberia arises from the inefficiency of Liberian administration of their own affairs, especially in matters of finance, and any suggestion which the United States might see fit to give them to follow the advice of such foreigners as they have themselves engaged to help in their administration would have a beneficial effect.

I have, etc.,

E. GREY.

His Excellency the Hon. WHITELAW REID.

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